



HARRISON REUBEN MERRILL  
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# Dusk on the Desert

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Harrison R. Merrill



*Get poem  
from  
Harrison R  
Merrill*

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## DREAMS COME TRUE

Here where the Redman's teepee once was reared  
And long grass waved above a virgin sod;  
Here where the Spanish priests of old appeared  
And claimed the lakebound prairie for their God,  
A heavy field of wheat has just been bound,  
And hardy sons of hardy pioneers  
Have shocked it in great ricks on stubble ground,  
Where like rich piles of gold it now appears;  
These sheaves are bundles of dear dreams come true;  
These fields are all bright visions come to pass—  
Some farmer dreamed what he would do  
And changed to wheat those far-flung fields of grass!

O patient Dreamer, help me, too, to dream,  
Help me to glimpse the visions you have seen!

## WASATCH MOUNTAINEER

I don't know why I like to climb steep heights  
Especially the barren kind I know.  
No lure of timbered slopes, no shrub delights  
The eye; it's steep and wide the way I go.  
On vigorous April days, warm full-moon nights  
Through golden heaps of leaves, or even snow  
I love to strive and fight and never stop  
Until I stand on some lone mountain-top.

Folks say my Wasatch hills are bleak and drear  
But on the peaks the gipsy winds blow free  
The world is far below—the sky is near  
And Nature seems to smile, and breathe, and be  
A friend who understands, whom I can hear  
In vast, deep pulsing silence talk to me.  
The distances, the endless spaces bring  
A thrill of mirth, and teach my soul to sing.

## MEDITATION IN EARLY SPRING

I stand here in this wintry sun—  
Cold sun!  
Whose rays like golden icicles shot among the sage,  
Pierce my wool clothes as cold winds rage.

Thorny shadscale everywhere,  
And lonely wastes of sand and snow,  
As sheep and I a browsing go.

They  
Find their forage on the snow-flecked earth—  
A wisp of grass, a hardy weed,  
A dried-out shrub of little worth.

I  
Browse across that dome of blue,  
Where white-robed angels glitter through.  
I feed, too—my active mind—among these shrubs,  
And ponder on the end of man

As pages of earth-life I scan,  
My eyes then to those mountains rise—  
White scalloped walls against the skies—  
Where—strange ice-forms—they solid stand,  
Defences of this wide, wide land.

This earth's so big, and time's so long,  
And we're so small—this flock and I—  
We seem lost here, our loudest song  
Could never reach yonder high blue sky!

Oh, God, are we worth while, these sheep and I,  
So frail, so tiny in Your vast domain?  
Have we some niche beneath that bending sky,  
Where You would have just us remain?

## THE SPELL OF THE ROCKIES

When it's springtime in the mountains  
Though the peaks are crowned with snow  
Showered sunshine floods the canyons  
Where the early freshets flow,  
And the crags and cliffs stand smiling  
That would seem stern, grim and cold  
Were their furrowed brows not burnished  
With the Spring's deluge of gold;  
In the spring the first brave song-bird  
Piped his song of boundless glee,  
And the spell of mighty mountains  
Casts enchantment over me,  
And I feel the hordes of angels  
Hover near with tender eyes  
As they trail their flowing mantles  
Like white clouds across the skies.

When summer's brilliant verdure  
Covers rock and brush and tree  
And the fragrant woodland flowers  
Make a heaven for the bee,  
And the eagles soar in circles  
Just below some milky cloud  
And the cataract's full chorus  
Chants an anthem long and loud;  
Hoary pinions stand in clusters  
Like old gossips in the sun  
Talking of the mints and clovers  
Where the laughing waters run,  
And when the day grows silent  
One can feel the mighty eye  
Of those scarred and grim old Rockies  
Watching, watching from the sky.

Then at last the tired summer  
Leaves her robes so worn and old  
'Till the harbinger of Winter  
Turns their trimmings all to gold,  
And the flying squirrels and chipmunks  
Horde their precious winter store  
That they nibble at in winter  
While the mountain blizzards roar;  
Then the Indian summer halo  
Softens every savage line  
Of the jagged mountain bulwarks  
Underneath the mild sunshine,  
And the harvest moon in silence  
From the ramparts softly glows  
And it seems the mighty mountain  
One's every secret knows.

One day Boreas whistles  
And adown the biting air  
The stinging snow in flurries  
Whips like Winter's hoary hair,  
And the bear with awkward footsteps  
Ambles quickly to his den  
Where he sleeps away the winter  
Far removed from fear of men.  
Then at last the clouds vanish  
And the sun bursts through the mist  
Changing shadows into velvet,  
Whitest snow to amethyst,  
And the peaks of pearly splendor  
Rise against the evening sky  
Like a spired eastern temple  
Touched with glory from on high.

## OUT IN THE WEST

Out in the west where the peaks are high  
And the pines and the balsams pierce the sky,  
And the wild coyote and the grizzly bear  
And the lynx and the bob-cat have their lair,  
There's a sort of a brotherhood, don't you know,  
Not known in the East where the fashions grow.  
There's old Bill Blake, now, honery cus  
When he's all tanked up, with his blunderbuss;  
But Bill's right there with his great big heart  
And his cash pile too, and he'll do his part  
If you're on the rocks or you need a hand  
To set you right in no-man's land.  
There are hundreds of Steves and Bobs and Bills  
Out where the dock-weeds deck the hills—  
Way out in the land we all love the best,  
Out in the brotherly, neighborly west.  
There's a sort of a freedom of act and word,  
Out where a moan is never heard,  
Out where his nerve is a man's one test,  
As he makes his way in the clear-eyed west!

## DISTRACTION

A girl,  
A curl,  
Two dewy lips,  
A couple of bantering eyes;  
A wink,  
Just think  
Such honey'd sips,—  
O, how can a fellow be wise!

## IN SEPTEMBER

In September what a glory  
Crowns the hills and fills the vales;  
What a pearly mist envelopes  
Silent peaks and hidden dales;  
What a scheme of vagrant colors  
Tints the clouds that float on high  
Like great oriental argosies  
Sailing peacefully the sky—  
In September!

In September what abundance  
Smiles from russet harvest field;  
What a wealth of fruit and flowers  
Orchard tracts and gardens yield;  
How the placid water glistens  
As it wafts its fleets of gold  
Past the tangled, seeded clover  
Rising from the marshy mold—  
In September!

In September fairy voices  
Chant in accents thin and low,  
"God has matched the tracts of heaven  
With these golden fields below  
From whose wide and clean expanses,  
If the song is understood,  
One can hear in sounding chorus—  
This is Life, and Life is Good—  
In September!"



### SPRING'S AWAKENING

When Spring lifts up her banner high,  
And shakes its folds athwart the sky  
In mellow tints of deepest blue  
Flecked o'er by clouds of every hue,  
The heart leaps up, the eye grows bright  
Deep breaths are drawn with pure delight—  
The pulse beat felt in earth and air  
Proclaims the stirring spirit there.

When spring-time whispers greet the ear  
And breezes come from far and near  
With perfume rare of woodland store  
And lyrics whispered o'er and o'er,  
The soul drinks deep through every sense  
Prepared for man by Providence  
To sip the sweets from growing things  
And learn the song all Nature sings.

When spring-time blossoms nod and sway  
And robins chirp the hours away,  
And willow tints are deep and bright  
As clouds of down in evening's light,—  
Then love is rife, 'tis mating time,  
All creatures feel the touch sublime,  
Above, below, from teeming sod  
Breaks forth a song of praise of God!

### WHEN SEGOES BLOOM IN UTAH

When segoes bloom in Utah underneath fair April suns  
Far beyond the dim horizons Thor unlimbers summer's guns  
Spring grasses paint the hillsides and the low-voiced call  
of spring  
Make ground squirrels flirt and whistle and a million black-  
birds sing.  
Roaming wide from snow to summer, trailing beauty where  
she hides  
Among the vales and mountains a mooning cowboy rides.  
It's I—within my arteries the drums of spring a-boom  
It's great to be in Utah when the segoes are in bloom.

When segoes bloom in Utah all the waking hills are gay  
With sage-green-streaked vermillion; the landscape rolls  
away  
To snow-clad peaks, like tepees of red gods who watch on  
high,  
A council of the mighty, there against a Utah sky;—  
Below—pine-dotted aspens march across the endless hills  
Through flood of golden sunshine which the sun right care-  
less spills.  
Just give me any cayuse in those miles of elbow room  
And you can call it heaven—when the segoes are in bloom.

When segoes bloom in Utah all the mustangs on the range  
Are frisky with the lush spring grass—they have a feeling  
strange.  
It may be wild geese honking or the mallards whizzing by  
That makes them throw an answer to the April dappled sky.  
Cayuses don't know days or years—emotions mark the  
time  
And count their seasons for them but I'd like to bet a dime  
That when along the sky-line clouds like mighty dragons  
loom  
They'll know it's spring in Utah and that segoes are in  
bloom.

## TIMPANOGOS

O, mighty Wonder Mountain, Watcher of the Plains,  
About whose lofty crest the Winds of Ages played  
Aeolian melodies, while their sharpened blades  
Carved shapes fantastical in riven stone,—  
What could thy voices say, were all thy crags  
And bald old peaks given speaking tongues?

On that day, so long ago, when Adam, our first parent,  
Turned westward from the flaming sword and Cherubim  
That kept the gates of Paradise,  
Sweet western winds, maternal in their tenderness,  
Cooled and caressed thy lofty, lonely brow.

Ages before, the icy waters of teeming seas  
Has ceased to lap against thy scarred old sides;  
Has left thy mighty, out-spread toes  
Dry and firm-planted on the valley's floor—  
Whence, like mighty Atlas, with his universal crown  
Of diamond-studded sapphire, thy commanding form  
Arose.  
Even then, the life of countless ages,  
Encrusted with the slime and ooze,  
Had been thrust up and had become  
Strange fossils in the speaking stone.

Since those far days, how many swords have flashed?  
How many war-like blows were struck?  
How many lives have ebbed away beside thy crystal  
Streams?

Puny man, today, swarms up thy rock-ribbed sides,  
Plays and shouts upon thy man-like breasts;  
Stands upright, crows upon thy shoulders—  
As some fond child thrown high aloft by lusty father  
Nearing peaceful home from fields of honest toil—  
Sleeks thy great sinews;  
Toils, laughing, up to crown thy ancient brow  
With laurels newly plucked along the road

To fame;  
He stands exultant on thy hoary head and cries,  
"The Summit, the lofty Summit! See what I have done!"

So stood, perhaps, some ancient man,  
While Morning's tender sun-light  
Dribbed down thy wrinkled face twisting thy features  
Into rugged smiles.  
Timpanogos, Wonder Mountain! Keeper of the Age-old  
Silences!  
Dream Maker! Revelator!

## SONG OF THE OUTLAW HORSE

I've heard the hiss of the horse-hair rope—  
I've felt the sting of the noose;  
I've had the Cowboy blast my hope,  
And I've sometimes struggled loose!  
I've heard his yell,  
I've felt his spell,  
But if ever I get free  
I'll balm the hurt  
Of his spurs and quirt  
In the sage of a sand-waved sea!

I've breathed the dust of the broncho corral—  
I've snorted out my fear!  
I've felt the snub-rope's strength compel,  
And the Twister teeth my ear!  
The horse-hair cinch  
Has made me flinch,  
But I'm still untamed and wild!  
I'll never quit—  
I'll not submit!—  
I'm the West's unconquered child!

## THE MOUNTAIN TRAIL

I love to climb a mountain trail  
That leads where ways are rough  
And scrubby oaks and sand and shale,  
Where going's rather tough;  
I love to feel the sun-washed air  
That showers over me  
And hear the ecstasy of birds  
That sing in some tall tree.

I love the trail, the heat, the sweat  
When altitudes are high  
And colors that I love so well  
Are spread o'er arching sky;  
I love to smell the fragrances  
That rise upon the breeze  
And mingle with the pungent breath  
Exhaled by balsam trees.

I love to see the "niger-toes"  
That nod along my way,  
And storke the mosses on the rocks  
Where crystal waters play  
The columbines and shooting stars  
And asters prim and proud  
And hosts of bluebells that I love  
Around my pathway crowd.

I love to scramble up some point  
And stand exalted there  
Where aspen groves and pines and peaks  
Surround me everywhere;  
And when at last I've reached the top  
I thrill because it seems  
The vesture of the spirit hosts  
Through rifted clouds are seen.

I stand bare-headed where the winds  
From open spaces blow  
The unseen bugles of the sky  
In all the chords I know;  
The glories of great heights attained  
Are worth the soul's travail  
That must be paid as step by step  
We climb the mountain trail.

## A CHRISTMAS THOUGHT

Old Christmas brings his pack of joys  
To winsome girls and laughing boys  
Whose stockings hang along the wall  
Where Santa Claus can fill them all.

To older hearts sweet smiles and tears  
Are brought from vaults of yester-years  
And sifted down in Christmas cheer  
To swell our rich contentment here.

And through the mists your face I see  
Unmarked with age, from sorrow free—  
Then past with future sweetly blends  
To re-unite old Loves—old Friends!